
Subject: stainless steel Curvex

Posted by [JackW](#) on Sat, 21 Nov 2015 16:05:01 GMT

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Model name : Unknown

Type : Curvex

Period/date : 1935

Gender : mens

Case Maker : unknown Swiss

Case Material : stainless stamped Staybrite

Case Serial : 21690

Case Style no : na

Caliber : 311

Movement Maker : Gruen

Movement Serial: 365725

Bracelet : na

Other info :

This is the watch that I bought from Mark (on the Vintage Watch Forums) earlier this week. He had little info on the history of the watch (i.e., previous owner, service history, etc). He got it in a lot that he purchased which had Hamilton's in it that he was after. In buying it, I apparently poached it out from under afire as he was thinking on it. Sorry...

The watch features a stainless steel case and is a Curvex. I knew stainless cased Curvexes existed; once had an exchange with Cary a loooooooooong time ago about them and that they are not particularly common as Curvexes go. The unfortunate aspect on it is the dial. It most assuredly isn't original and as vintage redials go... it ain't the best one. Back channel discussions with afire indicate that there is likely little info to be had on the design that was originally there. ...but there are certainly designs on other watches that are likely what the redial was going for. It shouldn't be too far off as long as the dial wasn't swapped at some point. Which is possible but I'll likely never know. Afire also mentioned to me that a good chunk of the stainless Curvex watches he has seen were Alpina's.

This is the only Curvex in my collection. I have had one before, but sold it. That one was a cal 440 in a GF case (on sterling)... This one in my opinion really is a "true" Curvex as it is representative of the long style that Gruen did in the 1930s with the 311's and 330s. This one lug-tip to lug-tip is 44mm long. That 440 was square and not unlike the contemporaneous veri-thin I had too.

Mark sold it to me as running... it does but the action on it is a tad slow so it'll get a COA before it goes into the wear rotation. On that note... it'll be some months. The watch I have on the bench now will be the last I do before packing up the shop to move. My wife and I bought a house.

As to the date: The movement serial fits square between two 311's in the database that both had 1935 dates engraved. Certainly Gruen was't casing things sequentially, but considering those dated watches, the short run on the 311's and the case material (absent the trademarked Guildite), I fell comfortable with being somewhat precise in the year.

For fun, here is the stainless steel triad of the Gruen's flagship wrist watches: Curvex, Quadron, and Pan American.

File Attachments

1) [case_data.jpg](#), downloaded 2473 times



2) [curved.jpg](#), downloaded 2467 times



3) [dial.jpg](#), downloaded 2433 times



4) [front.jpg](#), downloaded 2464 times



5) [movement.jpg](#), downloaded 2397 times



6) [the_triad.jpg](#), downloaded 2449 times



Subject: Re: stainless steel Curvex
Posted by [mikey](#) on Sun, 22 Nov 2015 01:03:28 GMT
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They look good Jack! Moving again? Congrats on the new house! Staying in the same general area?

Subject: Re: stainless steel Curvex
Posted by [Gary](#) on Sun, 22 Nov 2015 01:52:38 GMT
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"My wife and I bought a house."

Congratulations!

Subject: Re: stainless steel Curvex
Posted by [JackW](#) on Sun, 22 Nov 2015 23:00:18 GMT
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mikey wrote on Sun, 22 November 2015 01:03 They look good Jack! Moving again? Congrats on

the new house! Staying in the same general area?

Just moving across town. Never owned my own place so kinda excited and scared.

Subject: Re: stainless steel Curvex
Posted by [afire](#) on Mon, 23 Nov 2015 17:33:51 GMT
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Jack, if you get the dial redone, I'd go with Kirk Rich in California. Since it's not in the Master Book, we probably can't know exactly what the original print was, but there are a few other Import Curvex models from around that 1935 range in the book. They seem to have art deco-ish designs, and Kirk Rich does a great job with that style. I used International for my steel Curvex and wasn't thrilled with the result even after two attempts. That said, Kirk Rich is vastly overpriced and they take forever. But you'll likely get a good result, and I think this is a watch that's worth it.

As for poaching, you snooze, you lose, and I was dozing on this one.

Subject: Re: stainless steel Curvex
Posted by [Gary](#) on Mon, 23 Nov 2015 22:03:23 GMT
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afire wrote on Mon, 23 November 2015 17:33As for poaching, you snooze, you lose, and I was dozing on this one.

I hee-hawed over that one too, for days in fact. Seems though all his Gruen(s) were altered in one way or another so I passed.

The good: I've came upon some of the best finds by pure accident. On some I didn't even realize what I had.

The Bad: Yes I've snoozed and lost many times because of it. These I have dreams about!

The Ugly: Thought I've pulled the trigger on something that was too good to believe. Pulled it too fast and ended up in the junk pile.

Subject: Re: stainless steel Curvex
Posted by [kastner](#) on Tue, 24 Nov 2015 01:10:54 GMT
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GaryM wrote on Mon, 23 November 2015 22:03Seems though all his Gruen(s) were altered in one way or another so I passed.

That was my take as well. I don't regret not getting anything from the sale.

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Subject: Re: stainless steel Curvex
Posted by [timeliz](#) on Wed, 25 Nov 2015 22:30:47 GMT
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Nice watch, Jack! And great looking triple-play of a stainless collection!

Subject: Re: stainless steel Curvex
Posted by [JackW](#) on Wed, 25 Nov 2015 22:35:21 GMT
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GaryM wrote on Mon, 23 November 2015 22:03Seems though all his Gruen(s) were altered in one way or another so I passed.

Well, I will say one thing... the case is the rare aspect. Likely more rare than solid gold 311s. I also figure that the dial is not a major issue to the watch; it likely can be fixed without altering value negatively.

I also didn't pay his initial asking price. Mark came down without much back and forth.

Once this is cleaned and running right it'd be nice as is. Hopefully in the coming year or so, I'll run across an appropriate dial for it.

Subject: Re: stainless steel Curvex
Posted by [Gary](#) on Wed, 25 Nov 2015 23:01:04 GMT
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JackW wrote on Wed, 25 November 2015 22:35Mark came down without much back and forth. I must have missed on the option for negotiation. Should have made an offer on that Virtuoso.

Subject: Re: stainless steel Curvex
Posted by [afire](#) on Fri, 27 Nov 2015 21:12:24 GMT
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JackW wrote on Wed, 25 November 2015 16:35GaryM wrote on Mon, 23 November 2015 22:03Seems though all his Gruen(s) were altered in one way or another so I passed.

Well, I will say one thing... the case is the rare aspect.
+100. Guildite/Staybrite/steel may or may not be more desirable than solid gold in the general market, but to me (and I'm sure some others) it's infinitely more interesting and definitely far rarer. I'd trade a solid gold Curvex for a steel one in a heartbeat, no questions, redial or not. Well bought. FWIW, my waffling wasn't over the price. I thought it was a great buy. I was only pondering whether I needed it or not.

Subject: Re: stainless steel Curvex
Posted by [afire](#) on Fri, 27 Nov 2015 21:19:41 GMT
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And IMO, don't wait for a better/more appropriate dial to turn up. I don't think it'll ever happen. This watch's dial was almost certainly a totally different style than any domestic 311s. I'd bite the bullet triangulate a likely pattern from available Import Curvex models and put Kirk Rich on the job. That's what I should have done when I had a steel Curvex.

Subject: Re: stainless steel Curvex
Posted by [JackW](#) on Fri, 27 Nov 2015 23:19:55 GMT
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Which Kirk Rich? That is important. I used the one in California once and they not only butchered the job they were jerks about fixing it.

Subject: Re: stainless steel Curvex
Posted by [afire](#) on Sat, 28 Nov 2015 22:38:54 GMT
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The very same Kirk Rich. They are unpleasant to deal with, and I've had some unimpressive results on occasion, but IMO, they have better capability than International for this style of dial. The key with them is to be as specific as possible.

Subject: Re: stainless steel Curvex
Posted by [JackW](#) on Mon, 03 Jul 2017 05:19:46 GMT
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I finished this watch this weekend.

I took my time on this one... the dial was a major concern to me. I even tracked down a different dial based on some pictures from afire and Cary.

...but it didn't fit.

The spare cal 311, that came with the dial, I thought would at least be good for spare parts. It was a good purchase. So, I finally sent the dial to Kirk Rich of California. After much discussion with them, it was decided that the numbers and minute track were original; they were fired-on enamel. What wasn't correct was the subseconds bit, the font for Gruen and the lack of the word "Precision". These were just contact prints. I've seen a few other early-ish 311 Curvex's that did not say "Curvex" on the dial. I can always add it later if needed, likely was over the seconds bit as it was. I'm a bit disappointed in the small section where the minutes track is disconnected from the

edge of the seconds track. It is what it is... But after rather exhaustive research on this one, I think that this is what the original dial looked like; or darn close. I did not have "Switzerland" placed at the bottom.

Now that 311 was a PITA to work on. In disassembly of the watch for cleaning, I noted that the hair spring had several kinks and the over-coil was not well aligned. So, having had success with several other watches that needed minor tweeking I went after the hairspring. Holy cats! This is the softest hairspring metal I've encountered. It is even worse than other Gruen hairsprings. Did they change the type of alloys in the Conorum metal at some point? I've done work on several 405/420 series and other earlier movements such as the cal 485. I ended up mangling this one further... So I turned to the spare I bought. Water damage had impacted the movement, but it was most apparent in the hairspring. It starting disintegration as I was removing it. Cary saved me with another donor 311. Thanks Cary!

I did also get something unexpected in the first donor movement.... an original winding crown. It has the dust 'flange' that is seen on lots of Quadrons and tank models. Apparently it came on some early Curvex models too. Is marked with "International Brevet Depose", but no numbers. I believe that dust-proof crown rights was held by Alpina. Unfortunately, it doesn't fit to the case I have. The winding crown on mine is underfit, its hard to wind the watch fully.

This was one of the three movements to roll off the bench this week.

...and firmly attached to my wrist.

File Attachments

1) [Finished.JPG](#), downloaded 1972 times



2) [other dial.jpg](#), downloaded 1958 times

